Final Report

5.2-19

Development of a Model Farm Family Self-Help Support Program

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Funded by the Agriculture Development Fund

Abstract

The purpose of this project was to develop and evaluate a rural outreach program that focused on self-help as the major helping mechanism. A series of workshops on self-help and the farm crisis was offered in 3 rural communities in Saskatchewan. To assess the level of interest in self-help, an evaluation and phone survey were administered on two separate occasions. Both farm families and professionals expressed interest in obtaining assistance and written resources to start self-help groups in their communities. Further, publicity about the workshops generated over 50 requests for assistance and further workshops in all areas of the province.

Background and Objectives

Rural families in all areas of Canada have been affected by many factors over which they have no control, such as changing weather patterns, depressed grain and livestock prices, high operating costs and high interest rates. In rural Saskatchewan, this economic crisis has also created serious disruptions in social relationships within communities and in individual families. In March, 1987, the University of Saskatchewan Extension Division televised a program on stress and farmers, which generated a number of calls from farmers who identified with the program content and were searching for ways to cope with their present situation. Other groups have organized workshops, training programs and other community events to address the effects of this economic crisis. The self-help approach is being looked to by churches, regional colleges, interval houses, social services agencies, mental health associations, farm groups and women's groups as a way of recreating community support systems to deal with problems such as family violence, unemployment and health problems caused by chronic stress.

In response to this expression of need concerning farm stress and interest in the self-help approach, the Saskatchewan Self-Help Development Unit initiated the development of a rural outreach program. The goals and objectives of this program were two-fold. First, it was designed to inform rural members

(farmers and professionals) on the social and psychological consequences of the farm crisis. Second, this program served to inform members on the benefits of self-help groups and provided training and skills for the development of such groups. The basic philosophy of the program was that by strengthening social supports through active involvement in a self-help group, individuals will be better able to develop the skills needed to defend themselves against the potential harms of the present economic crisis.

There were three phases to the implementation of the rural outreach program. The first phase involved a series of consultation meetings and collection of resource materials. The purpose of these meetings was to build on the experiences of other organizations, and to adapt relevant materials for kits and workshops. It also identified the most appropriate group models, structures and meeting formats to meet the diverse needs of farm families. The second phase began with the launching of a series of workshops in three rural communities (Rosetown, Watrous, and Davidson). The purpose of the workshops in Rosetown and Watrous was to identify the current concerns of farm families and to suggest self-help group development as a viable option in confronting these concerns. The third workshop, which was offered in Davidson, targeted professionals in rural communities and the contributions they could make by assisting in the facilitation and maintenance of self-help groups. In the last

phase, individuals who were interested in developing support groups were contacted and given training and access to the necessary materials. More specifically, individuals who were currently feeling the effects of the farm crisis and looking for solutions were given the following: guidelines to increase their coping skills, methods of strengthening competence, and suggestions on ways to increase social support in order that they may eventually be able to reduce the stressful events. Interested professionals were given training on group development and formation to improve their ability to facilitate self-help group development in their community.

In order to assess the impact of this program, the workshop participants were interviewed to determine the interest in self-help, and the needs of families and professionals in implementing support programs in their communities. Before the methodology and results of the evaluation are discussed, however, information on the theory and rational guiding the development of the present program is provided in the following section.

Literature Review

Stress and Stressors

Stress has been defined as "a set of physical or mental reactions to anything that places demands upon a person which exceeds his or her ability to cope." (Berkowitz, 1984). It involves three elements: the demands or stressors, the capabilities of the individual or family, and the symptoms that are exhibited. Stressors include events that can't be controlled such as the weather, commodity prices, or government policies, and events that can be controlled, such as family communication, balancing farm and family responsibilities, or off farm employment. The capabilities or resources that an individual or family can draw on in stressful situations include both personal attributes such as positive self-esteem, and social resources such as family, neighbors and voluntary associations(Keating, N. & Doherty, M. 1988). There are 5 ways that stress is expressed: through physical, emotional, behavioural, and cognitive changes, and through loss of a sense of control in one's life (Haverstock, 1988).

In a study comparing farm men and women with a group of business people, Walker and Walker (1988) examined differences in the type and frequency of stress symptoms. The results indicated that compared to the non-farm sample, farmers reported significantly higher symptom levels. The symptoms that best

differentiated between the rural and urban groups included loss of temper, back pain, increased drinking, and poor memory. In a related study, Walker and Walker (1987) compared the stress symptoms in farmers with a group of policemen. Again, similar results were obtained in that farmers were found to exhibit symptoms such as headaches, marriage problems, and irritability three to four times more than the police group. The Walkers feel that the high prevalence of stress symptoms in the farm group compared to a non-farm group may be due to the continuous nature of stressors in rural communities.

The longer an individual is exposed to events which elicit psychological or physiological reactions like those described above, the greater is the risk to their physical and emotional well-being (Haverstock, 1987). It is therefore important that interventions include three elements: increasing mastery or self-esteem, reducing role conflict, and promote use of social resources (Keating, N. & Doherty, M. 1988). Their research has indicated that more emphasis was needed on increasing the personal and social resources of farm families so that they are more capable in dealing with the financial issues.

In a review of the literature on farm stressors, Olson and Schellenberg (1986) found that the core of a number of farm-related stressors occurred within the context of the family. In contrast to non-farm families, familial and economic roles are

combined within the farm unit. This relationship can be potentially stressful for a number of reasons. First, since farm work demands rotate on a seasonal cycle, busy periods require members to work to their full capacity. This type of time expenditure has the potential to disrupt family relationships because of the insufficient contact among family members. Similarly, tension may arise during these busy periods as a result of fatigue and uncontrollable factors such as the weather.(Olson and Schellenberg, 1986).

Another familial stressor common in rural families relates to the wife's role in the farming enterprise. For example, in a study conducted by Berkowitz and Perkins (1984) on stressors within the farm family, it was found that the only significant predictors of the amount of stress experienced by farm women was role-conflict and husband support. That is, farm women had difficulty in gaining acknowledgement of their contribution to the farming enterprise. Husband support, however, alleviated the negative or stressful consequences of role conflict.

The second category of stressors which exist among farm families are those which occur outside the family, or are extra-familial in nature (Olson and Schellenberg, 1986). The conglomerate of stressors within this category are primarily financial in nature. Farmers are experiencing economic pressures which are very specific to their occupation. The current

economic crisis has brought high interest rates, low commodity prices, and increased farm operation costs (Wright and Rosenblatt, 1987). For some, this can mean the loss of the farm.

In turn, the loss of a farm, which is financial in nature, has the potential of disrupting relationships among the farm family, or the familial component of stress. Since work and family are so intertwined, the loss of a farm is also a loss of a valued way of life, and of several generations of investment. Being forced off the land may raise questions about one's self-worth, competency, and adequacy as a parent and spouse (Wright and Rosenblatt, 1987). Therefore, it seems that the current financial crisis has the ability to produce even more strain within the context of the family. Successful negotiation and resolution of financial difficulties which presently affect the majority of farm families, then, has the potential of preventing many family related problems.

Prevention

It is obvious that the removal of the financial stressors farm communities are currently facing is a long-range goal which will first require major policy changes at the government level. However, research on life-stress events indicates that there are four main methods of preventing the stress related problems discussed earlier which can be addressed immediately (Williams,

1988).

First, farmers need to organize themselves so that they can work together to reduce and eventually eliminate the stressful events. As a group, farmers are more likely to be effective at changing existing policies governing marketing practices and replacing them with policies that support the long term stability of rural communities. As an example, it is those that have elected to stay and fight for the values that they believe in which have forced the Canadian Government to recognize that the trend toward corporate concentration of ownership in food production and distribution is not necessarily inevitable (Pugh, 1987). In addition to getting possible reforms established to existing policies, simply working towards a unified goal can bring gratification.

Secondly, farmers need to develop effective coping skills. Basically, coping can function in two ways: to enhance problem solving or to control emotions (Kenkel, 1986). To better protect oneself from being harmed from various life-events, farmers need to better plan for the future by utilizing such things as goal-setting, problem-solving, negotiation, stress management, anger management, and job search skills (Williams, 1988). More generally, farmers confronted with the variety of stressors enmeshed in the rural environment need to be flexible and rely on the most appropriate coping strategy for that particular situation.

Thirdly, farmers need to enhance their self-concept by building competence and efficiency. That is, farm families need to be able to view themselves as having competence, power, and the ability to influence their environment. Competence involves awareness of options, knowledge of resources, and the courage to act (Williams, 1988). The importance of this factor can be seen through the results of a recent study conducted by Keating (1987). In this study, available resources and stress levels of both men and women were studied through a random sample of 753 farm owners in Alberta. Results of the study indicated that, for both men and women, the personal resource of mastery was the strongest predictor of stress. High stress farmers felt that their fate and consequently their livelihood was out of their control.

Lastly, farm families need to strengthen their social supports. Social supports exist when, "people feel cared for and loved, when they feel they are valued as individuals, and when they belong to a network involving mutual support" (Williams, 1988). Getting together with other individuals who share a common problem gives members a chance to express and discuss their feelings openly. This is an important part of self-help groups because for some, they feel that they are the only ones having problems. In turn, support groups can be esteem builders because they give members a chance to build themselves up by helping others. Group meetings can also bring hope to its

members through the discussion and sharing of ideas for social change (Williams, 1987). A major challenge, then, is to support the growth, development and maintenance of the community.

However, as Williams (1988) points out, the support systems that existed at one time in farming no longer exist. Fifty years ago events such as church socials brought farm families together which in turn enhanced the sense of community. Since that period "farms have grown larger and larger, farm families have become more dependent on capital and technology and much less dependent on human labour" (Williams, 1987, p. 2). As a result, the community of farmers have become isolated from one another.

In addition to the change in structure within the community, Wright and Rosenblatt (1987) have identified other reasons why neighbors may not support one another. For example, neighbors may draw away from a farm family in trouble because they feel their distance is polite and respectful or display avoidance in order that they do not have to confront their own anxiety and discomfort. Community members may also engage in blaming the victim for their present situation. Not only does this strategy enable one to distance themselves from the victim, but it is also a means of feeling safe from whatever has harmed the victim. On the other hand, it may be the victim who prefers to create distance from the community. People may fear that their reputation will be tarnished if word gets out of their present

situation. This reaction makes it impossible for others to reach out and provide support. For all these reasons, it is important that members of communities can get past these barriers to either offer or accept support.

Support Groups

With the prevention strategies identified, the next step is to identify the most appropriate channels of distributing the necessary information farmers need to best guard themselves against the psychological consequences of the farm crisis. The Saskatchewan Self-Help Development Unit has decided to approach this problem through the creation of self-help support groups in various communities in Saskatchewan. There are basically two factors that guided the decision to adapt such an approach.

First, members of rural communities are more likely to seek out help from family and friends than to approach mental health services. One of the most obvious reasons for this is that rural communities are not equipped with such services. Perhaps, more importantly however is that members of rural communities fear the stigma that is attached to receiving such a service and are generally suspicious of the mental health profession (Kenkel, 1986). For these reasons, prevention efforts need to be consistent with rural values.

Secondly, in contrast to existing professional systems, self-help groups take into account the whole multitude of factors that are creating the problems and offer a number of solutions in approaching them. On the other hand, mental health services tend to deal with specific symptoms or issues and focus efforts on alleviating the symptom rather than the causes of the problem (Gartner and Riessman, 1979). By learning about common aspects of the problem through involvement in a self-help group, and by helping one another develop the necessary skills needed for healthy living, members are better able to confront and change their present situation. Therefore, the benefits of a self-help group can be obtained from either the interpersonal nature of the relationships among group members or by the social structure of the group as a whole.

Method

Procedure

Three workshops were planned in communities no further than a one hour drive from Saskatoon, where there was an agency or community group that was interested in co-sponsoring such an event. Initial discussions with staff of regional colleges, and local organizations indicated strong interest in sponsorship of these workshops. Further discussion and meetings indicated that one workshop in Davidson focussing on the role of professionals in facilitating self-help group development, and two workshops in Rosetown and Watrous focussing on farm families starting groups would be the best way to proceed. It was decided that between 20 to 45 participants could be expected to attend each workshop, and the focus would be on the effects of the farm crisis on families and communities, developing skills to reach out and support others, and strategies to strengthen community networks.

The Unit undertook the major work of developing posters and brochures, an extensive promotion campaign and co-ordination of communication. The Colleges took care of pre-registration, local promotion, facilities and lunch arrangements. Over 900 packages were distributed to churches, schools, agriculture representative offices, home care districts, libraries, community organizations, women's groups, Health and Social Service offices, and hospitals.

Posters were put up in communities within a 100 km radius of Rosetown and Watrous. All daily and weekly newspapers, and all radio and T.V. stations received a news release and copies of the promotional materials. Newspaper advertisements were placed by the Colleges in the Davidson Leader, the Rosetown Eagle and the Watrous Manitou. Radio interviews were done with CJWW, CBC, and CFQC in Saskatoon, CJGX in Yorkton, and CJYM in Rosetown. On December 6th, Dr. Williams did three media interviews with CBC Radio, CFQC-TV and CJWW Radio, which were aired the next day at different times. At the Davidson workshop interviews were done with CBC-TV, Saskatoon Star Phoenix and the Western Producer. The Regional Colleges also used their local networks to advertise the workshops. Over 8000 brochures and 2000 posters were distributed province wide, in a six week period.

The workshops were held December 7th, 8th and 9th, 9:30 am to 4:30 pm each day. All the workshops were well attended, with more that 50 participants at each, which surpassed our original estimated maximum. In order to obtain information regarding participants' reactions to the workshops and to assess the relative amount of interest in self-help group development, questionnaires were constructed and evaluations were conducted on two separate occasions.

The first evaluation was conducted following the completion of each workshop. Since the participants in the Davidson

workshop were primarily professionals and those in the Watrous and Rosetown workshops were mainly farmers, separate evaluation forms were constructed for the respective groups. Participants were asked to complete a self-administered questionnaire regarding their attitudes towards the workshops and their interest in forming or participating in a self-help group. The construction of the questionnaires followed that of the Total Design Method (Dillman, 1978) with the exception that the questionnaires were not in booklet form.

The second evaluation occurred two months later when all members who were present at the workshops were contacted by telephone and again asked questions similar to those to the first evaluation. The purpose of the telephone survey was to identify possible changes in attitudes towards the workshops, and to identify members who still were interested in self-help. As with the first evaluation, separate questionnaires were constructed for the farm and professional groups. The structure of the questionnaires was modelled after the Total Design Method except that members were not sent an advance letter informing them of the impending survey. This, however, was not seen as a problem since the participants were from a specialized population and Dillman (1978) states that for specialized populations an advance letter does not have a significant influence. Lastly, each participant was telephoned up to three times before they were excluded from the study.

Participants

Participants in the three workshops formed the potential subject pool for the two evaluations. There was a total of 140 participants over the three days, with 89 farmers in the Rosetown and Watrous workshops and 33 professionals in attendance at the Davidson workshop. 16 professionals attended the Rosetown and Watrous workshops, and 13 farmers attended the Davidson workshop.

Overall, 76 women and 73 men attended the workshops, with 18 being married couples. The majority of participants were from age 30 to 49, most of whom would have started farming in the 1970's when land prices and interest rates were very high. The data from the workshop evaluation is provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Age of Participants

Category	Davidson		Rosetown		Watrous		Total
	F	P	F	P	F	P	
20-29	0	0	0	2	2	0	4
30-39	3	6	5	0	10	1	25
40-49	7	9	5	1	12	0	34
50-59	2	4	4	0	7	0	17
60-69	1	0	1	0	2	0	4
70-79	0	0	1	0	0	0	1

Results

The following is a detailed description of the results obtained from the self-administered and telephone surveys for both the farm and professional groups. Those questions which pertain to participant's attitudes towards the workshops and interest in self-help are discussed first, with questions about the resources that are needed to start groups discussed separately.

Publicity Methods

In the self-administered questionnaire, participants were asked to indicate the methods by which they became aware of the workshop from the choices indicated in Table 2.

Table 2: Publicity Methods

Category	Davidson	Rosetown	Watrous
Town Pastor	3	3	3
Church Bulletin	0	4	4
Regional College	11	0	17
Local Organization	7	8	6
Agriculture Rep	2	0	4
Ad/Article in Newspaper	3	2	7
Radio/TV Announcement	0	5	2
School Newsletter	0	0	3
Personal Contact	3	3	3

In both Davidson and Watrous, the Regional College was the largest source of information, while Rosetown participants did not mention the College. Staff at the Colleges in Davidson and Watrous were the key contacts for co-sponsoring the workshops and took a very active role in promoting them. In Rosetown, however, the role of the College was only in taking registrations and placing ads in the local paper. Clearly, the staff involved in promoting the workshops raised the profile of the College in being a co-sponsor, and were very effective in encouraging attendance. The next largest source of information were local organizations, including churches. Media announcements, were most effective in Rosetown and Watrous. These communities benefitted from the interviews with Roger done on the 6th of December and at the Davidson workshop. Watrous was the only community where information was distributed to each school child in the district, and 3 participants reported this as a source of information. Undoubtedly, local organizations are the most effective in promoting attendance at workshops such as these, which emphasises the importance of co-sponsoring and using the strengths of community contacts and resources.

Farmers -- Self Administered Questionnaire

Evaluations were obtained from a total of 53 farmers from the Rosetown and Watrous workshops combined, giving a response rate of 60%. A copy of the evaluation questionnaire appears in Appendix A. Questions 2-5 inclusive pertain to participant's attitudes towards the workshop. Participant's interest in self help groups was obtained through analysis of responses to questions 6 and 7.

a. Workshop Evaluation. Participants were asked to indicate their reaction to the workshop on a scale ranging from 1 (very favorable) to 5 (very unfavorable). Table 1 provides a summary of the responses to this question. The results suggest that farmers reacted to the workshop favorably. However, in order to gain a better understanding of these reactions, the qualitative questions pertaining to workshop evaluation are summarized following the table.

Table 3: Farmer's reaction to the workshop

Category	# of people	Percentage
Very favorable	24	45
Favorable	28	53
Neutral	1	2

Most Useful -- Participants were asked what they found to be the most useful aspect of the workshop. A substantial number of people (35 or 66%) mentioned that the workshop gave them an

opportunity to communicate and share ideas with one another. As one participant stated, "it showed that we are not alone with our problems." A second theme which emerged from 9 (16%) of the participants was the value in learning how to start a support group. A third theme which was identified from responses of 6 participants (11%) was the presentation on stress symptoms and the information on ways to alleviate the effects. Finally, 3 members (5%) felt that the whole workshop was useful with two persons commenting on the "exceptional" guest speaker.

Not Useful -- In response to the question of what should be left out of future workshops, 45 or 85% felt that nothing should be omitted, that everything was important. Four people (8%) felt that a Canadian rather than an American speaker/intervention should be used, and three (6%) found the role-playing exercise uncomfortable or difficult.

Not Covered -- In response to the question regarding whether something was not covered which they would have liked to have seen, 43 people (81%) were apparently happy with the workshop content, as they left the question unanswered. Three people (5%) mentioned the need for more information on communications skills. Another theme that emerged from three responses (5%) was the need to learn more about the legal rights of farmers. Finally two people (4%) felt that the workshop should have been longer, and one person wanted more information on goal-setting.

b. Interest in Self Help.- It appears that the workshops were very successful in presenting participants with information on self-help, as 45 people (85%) stated that the workshop was informative enough to allow them to make a decision regarding the usefulness of self-help groups. Of these 45, 41 people (77%) stated that they would be interested in joining a self-help group.

Farmers -- Telephone Survey

Responses to the telephone survey were obtained from 60 farmers, giving a 67% response rate. This survey, which appears in Appendix B, determines farmer's feelings towards the workshop in addition to identifying those members who continued to be interested in self help. Those who were still interested in either starting or joining a group were then asked in what ways they feel self-help groups would benefit their community. This question serves to evaluate the feasibility of participant's expectations of self-help groups. Farmer's satisfaction with the workshop was determined through analysis of questions 1-3 inclusive. Interest in self-help was determined by examining responses to questions 5 and 5a. Participant's views on the perceived benefits of self-help was obtained through examination of responses to question 7.

a. Workshop Evaluation. Table 4 is a summary of farmer's satisfaction with the workshop. The results suggest that even after 2 months, farmers were still satisfied with what the workshop had offered.

Table 4: Farmer's satisfaction with the workshop

Category	# of people	Percentage
Very Satisfied	22	37
Somewhat Satisfied	31	52
Neither	1	2
Somewhat Dissatisfied	5	8
Very Dissatisfied	1	2

Most Useful - A substantial number of people (30 or 50%) indicated that the discussion and sharing which occurred in the small groups was the most useful. As one participant stated, "The interchange in small groups was the most useful. It was good to know that we are not alone, we lost some land this summer and its been dreadful." Another theme which emerged, which is related to the first, is the mention by 6 people (10%) that the role-playing exercises were the most useful. Other things mentioned were the communications/listening skills, becoming aware of alternatives, effects of long-term stress, and information on forming self-help groups. Finally, 5 people (8%) stated that everything was useful.

Not Covered -- The predominant theme which emerged here was the need for more information on the banks (6 people or 10%),

that is, the financial side of the crisis. Two people (3%) felt that there should have been more Canadian input, such as having a Canadian speaker. Two others (3%) mentioned that there should have been more on the specifics to starting a self-help group. There were individual comments about the need for information about time management, coping skills, organic farming, health problems, and communication within the family.

b. Interest in Self Help. Responses indicated that 35 people (58%) were interested in forming a self-help group and a total of 40 (67%) would be willing to join a group. When asked the benefits of a self-help group, two dominant themes emerged. Thirteen people (22%) felt that the support from one another would be the most important aspect. Knowing that they do not have to face the problem alone is helpful in coping with stress. Another twelve people (20%) indicated that the sharing of experiences and the exchange of information and ideas was the most important thing. As one participant claimed, "farmers are competitive so when it comes to problems, they don't want to talk about them and tend to isolate themselves, a group could open them up to talk." Other comments pertained to the psychological benefits, and encouraging one another to take action. Two people (3%) mentioned that they were not totally convinced that a group would be beneficial.

Two comments were given to this question which, although did not precisely specify what the benefits would be, pointed out the suicide problem and the need for action. As one participant stated, "I wish that people in crisis could recognize their problem and bring them out before they are in so deep. We had a suicide in our family because the problem got so bad." Another member commented, "... the suicide rate in our community is extremely high." These comments indicate that these members feel that a self help group might be able to prevent such occurrences from happening, as both were interested in self help group development.

Professionals -- Self-Administered Questionnaire

Evaluations were obtained from 21 professionals (64%) who attended the workshop in Watrous. The evaluation questionnaire is identical to that in Appendix A except for that in question 7 participants were asked if they would be interested in the facilitation of, rather than participation in, a self help group.

a. Workshop Evaluation. Table 5 is a summary of the numerical evaluations. These results suggest that professionals viewed the workshop favorably. Responses to the qualitative questions are examined following the table to expand on these reactions.

Table 5: Professionals' Reaction to the Workshop

Category	# of people	Percentage
Very Favorable	9	43
Favorable	11	53
Neutral	1	5

Most Useful -- A substantial number of people (12 or 57%) stated that learning about self-help in terms of organizing and supporting such groups was the most useful. Four people (19%) mentioned the communication and sharing aspect as the most useful. As one participant stated, "working through the minefields of apprehension regarding talking was the most important part of the workshop." Single comments addressed the identification of stress symptoms, the morning session on stress symptoms and identification of problems in starting self-help groups, and information on community leadership.

Not Useful -- Ten people (48%) felt that nothing should be left out. Four people (19%) felt that there was too much information and details given on the groups in Wisconsin. Individual comments addressed the length of the information on obstacles to getting groups started, and testimonials.

Not Covered -- Eight participants (38%) were totally satisfied with the content as they said that nothing needed to be added. Two people (10%) felt that there needed to be more on how to work with people who are denying the crisis, two others (10%) mentioned the need for answers to various farm policy questions,

and one person (5%) wanted more discussion on the relationship of professionals to self-help.

b. Interest in Self-Help. The workshop was successful in terms of relaying information on self help as 17 people (81%) felt that it was informative enough to let them decide whether a self-help group would be beneficial in their community. Fifteen (71%) of these seventeen stated that they would be interested in facilitating the formation of a group in their community.

Professional -- Telephone Survey

Responses from fourteen professionals (42%) who attended the Davidson workshop were obtained. As with the telephone survey for farmers, the telephone script for professionals was identical except that professionals were asked whether they would be interested in facilitating a group, not whether they would want to join a group.

a. Workshop Evaluation. Table 6 provides a summary of the professionals' overall satisfaction with the workshop. Although the majority of people were satisfied, a few were dissatisfied with the workshop.

Table 6: Professionals' satisfaction with the workshop

Category	# of people	Percentage	
Very Satisfied	4	29	
Somewhat Satisfied	5	36	
Neutral	2	14	Somewhat
Dissatisfied	3	21	
Very Dissatisfied	1	2	

Most Useful - Five people (36%) specifically commented on Roger's effectiveness in discussing the farm crisis. Three people (21%) mentioned the small group discussions and the communication which took place in these groups. Individual comments identified the video presentation, stress management techniques and the identification of stress symptoms.

Not Covered -- Two people (14%) felt that everything of importance had been covered. Another two (14%) felt that not enough information was given on how to start a self-help group. Individual comments were given on the preference for examples closer to home and a process which involved the participants more.

b. Interest in Self-Help. Eight professionals (57%) stated that they would be interested in facilitating the development of a self-help group in their community. Two respondents (14%) felt that a group would promote mental health with comments pertaining to the alleviation of stress and depression. Two others (14%) indicated that the moral support would be the most beneficial.

Single comments addressed the ability of a group to identify problem areas and provide possible solutions. Finally, one professional was unsure whether self-help groups would be beneficial.

Resources Needed to Start Groups

In the telephone survey, participants (professionals and farmers) who had expressed interest in starting or being involved in a self-help group were asked which resources would be the most useful to them, as outlined in Table 7 below.

Resources Needed to Start Self-Help Groups

Category	Davidson	Rosetown	Watrous
Written Materials	10	15	30
Series of Workshops	9	13	28
Ongoing Consultation	11	16	27
Helpful Local Resource People	11	14	25

This seems to indicate the need for a range of resources being provided within an ongoing program of support to local agencies and groups of interested families. Participants also mentioned specific written resources that would be useful. These included a Canadian/Saskatchewan version of Roger William's Neighbor to Neighbor Resource Guide, a compilation of programs

and projects that others have tried, focussing on what has and has not worked, and specific information on starting groups in rural areas. They believed that ongoing communication with others who are initiating self-help approaches in different parts of the province would be very helpful. This could be done through workshops, regional meetings and publishing articles in newsletters of various agencies. The establishment of a rural crisis line or helpline was seen as a priority.

Discussion

The results from both the self-administered and telephone surveys indicate that both farmers and professionals were satisfied with the workshop. For the majority of farmers, the communication and sharing of experiences which occurred in the workshop was among the most useful. Professionals, on the other hand, found the discussion on self-help the most useful. This difference in opinion is not surprising considering the goals of the workshops were different for the two groups of participants. That is, the workshop for professionals aimed toward informing participants on the role they could play as facilitators of support groups. The workshops for farmers were more oriented towards outlining the benefits which could be received from support groups.

Although, for the most part, farmers and professionals felt that the workshops were successful in addressing their concerns, suggestions for change in workshop format and content were given by a few participants. For instance, a few farmers felt that a Canadian speaker should be featured and that there needed to be more focus on the financial side of the crisis. Similarly, some of the professionals wanted more information on various farm policy questions in addition to learning ways of reaching those who are denying the crisis. Such comments are useful in that they may be taken into consideration in the designing of future programs.

Lastly, it appears that the workshops were successful in providing participants with information on the utility of self-help groups. More importantly, many farmers and professionals expressed interest in either facilitating and/or joining a group in their respective communities. The farmers felt that the benefits of a support group were the support, sharing, and exchange of information. Professionals felt that a support group would promote mental health and provide moral support to its members. It was necessary to examine participants' views on the perceived benefits of self-help in order to evaluate the feasibility of their expectations. The results clearly indicate that such expectations are reasonable and obtainable through the self-help approach.

Conclusions and Impact

This evaluation project has demonstrated the potential of collaboration between organizations to encourage both farm families and professionals to develop self-help approaches in their communitise. It generated over 50 inquiries for information about farm stress, for further workshops in all areas of the province, for information on starting self help groups and for consultations to start local groups.

Resource materials will be published and distributed to the workshop participants, to organizations and individuals who assisted with the initial consultations and to rural churches, schools, farm organizations and government health and social services departments. Funding is being sought to produce a Canadian/Saskatchewan version of Neighbor to Neighbor, and to continue developing and providing the resources that workshop participants and others have indicated that they need to initiate self-help/support groups in rural areas.

Further, more research is needed to determine which self-help models work best in rural agricultural communities, and the most effective ways to provide support and assistance to them. It is essential that all rural families have access to services that recognize and respect their need to deal with the social and emotional effects of financial difficulties.

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRES

APPENDIX A

WORKSHOP EVALUATION FORM FOR THE FARM GROUP

DISCOVER HOW TO: STAY "UP" IN A "DOWN" ECONOMY

We would appreciate it if you would take a couple of minutes to answer a few questions after the workshop is over. Your answers will help us to continue developing self-help programs to assist farm families.

1 How did you become aware of this workshop? (Circle number of choice)

1 TOWN PASTOR
2 COMMUNITY COLLEGE
3 CHURCH BULLETIN
4 AD OR ARTICLE IN THE NEWSPAPER
5 LOCAL ORGANIZATION OR AGENCY
6 AGRICULTURE REPRESENTATIVE
7 RADIO OR TV ANNOUNCEMENT
8 SCHOOL NEWSLETTER
9 OTHER (please specify)_____

2 What was the most useful aspect of this workshop?

_____

_____

3 What would you leave out of future workshops?

_____

_____

4 Was there anything that was not covered by this workshop in which you would be interested in learning about?

_____

_____

5 How would you characterize your reaction to this workshop? (please circle your response)

1 VERY FAVORABLE
2 FAVORABLE
3 NEUTRAL
4 UNFAVORABLE
5 VERY UNFAVORABLE

6 Was this workshop informative enough to allow you to decide whether or not a self-help group would be useful for your community? (Circle number of choice)

1 YES
2 NO

7 Would you be interested in participating in the formation of a self-help group in your community?

1 YES
2 NO

8 What kind of resources would be helpful in starting a self-help group in your area? (Circle number of choice)

1 WRITTEN MATERIALS ON THE "HOW TO'S" OF STARTING A GROUP
2 WORKSHOPS ON SUCH THINGS AS LEADERSHIP SKILLS, CONFLICT RESOLUTION, COPING SKILLS
3 ONGOING CONSULTATION
4 OTHER (please specify)_____

_____

9 PERSONAL INFORMATION

a) Which community do you live in or reside nearest to?

_____

b) What is your age? (please circle appropriate range)

1 20-29 years
2 30-39 years
3 40-49 years
4 50-59 years
5 60-69 years
6 70-79 years
7 80+ years

c) Gender _____male
_____female

d) What is your present occupation?_____
how long?_____

10 Any other comments you would like to make?

_____
_____
_____
_____

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE!

APPENDIX A: (CONTINUED)

WORKSHOP EVALUATION FORM FOR PROFESSIONALS

WORKING TOGETHER: PROFESSIONALS AND FARM FAMILIES BUILDING SELF-HELP NETWORKS IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

We would appreciate it if you would take a couple of minutes to answer a few questions after the workshop is over. Your answers will help us to continue developing self-help programs to assist farm families.

1 How did you become aware of this workshop? (Circle number of choice)

1 TOWN PASTOR
2 COMMUNITY COLLEGE
3 CHURCH BULLETIN
4 AD OR ARTICLE IN THE NEWSPAPER
5 LOCAL ORGANIZATION OR AGENCY
6 AGRICULTURE REPRESENTATIVE
7 RADIO OR TV ANNOUNCEMENT
8 SCHOOL NEWSLETTER
9 OTHER (please specify)_____

2 What was the most useful aspect of this workshop?

_____

_____

3 What would you leave out of future workshops?

_____

_____

4 Was there anything that was not covered by this workshop in which you would be interested in learning about?

_____

_____

5 How would you characterize your reaction to this workshop? (please circle your response)

1 VERY FAVORABLE
2 FAVORABLE
3 NEUTRAL
4 UNFAVORABLE
5 VERY UNFAVORABLE

6 Was this workshop informative enough to allow you to decide whether or not a self-help group would be useful for your community?

_____

_____

7 Would you be interested in facilitating the formation of a self-help group in your community?

_____

8 What kind of resources would be helpful in starting a self-help group in your area? (Circle number of choice)

1 WRITTEN MATERIALS ON THE "HOW TO'S" OF STARTING A GROUP
2 WORKSHOPS ON SUCH THINGS AS LEADERSHIP SKILLS, CONFLICT RESOLUTION, COPING SKILLS
3 ONGOING CONSULTATION
4 OTHER (please specify)_____

_____

9 PERSONAL INFORMATION

a) Which community do you live in or reside nearest to?

_____

b) What is your age? (please circle appropriate range)

1 20-29 years
2 30-39 years
3 40-49 years
4 50-59 years
5 60-69 years
6 70-79 years
7 80+ years

c) Gender _____male
_____female

d) What is your present occupation?_____

how long?_____

10 Any other comments you would like to make?

_____

_____

_____

_____

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE!

APPENDIX A: (CONTINUED)

TELEPHONE SURVEY FOR THE FARM GROUP

ATTITUDES TOWARDS FARM STRESS WORKSHOP- PART II

Hello, Is (first/last name) there please?

This is (interviewer's name) from the Saskatchewan Self-help Developmental Unit. In December you participated in a workshop we sponsored which focused on farm stress. At that time, you completed a questionnaire regarding your evaluation of the workshop. Since you have had time to think over the various aspects of the workshop more clearly, we would now like to get some of your present thoughts regarding the workshop and on the development of a self-help group in your community.

The questions I need to ask should take about 15 minutes. I want to add that I would be happy to answer any questions you might have about the study, either now or later.

Okay?--Yes(proceed with survey)
No (thank you for your time)

1. We would like to begin by asking you how satisfied you are with the workshop? Would you say you are very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, neither satisfied or dissatisisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied?

VERY SATISFIED..... 1
SOMEWHAT SATISFIED.....2
NEITHER SATISFIED OR DISSATISFIED.....3
SOMEWHAT DISSATISFIED.....4
VERY DISSATISFIED.....5

2. What parts of the workshop do you feel were most useful?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

3. Was there anything that was not covered by the workshop in which you would be intertested in learning about?

_____
_____
_____
_____

4. Have you or anyone else you know of taken any action towards resolving some of your concerns regarding the farm crisis?

_____YES.....1
NO.....2

4a. What were these actions?

_____
_____
_____
_____

5. Would you be interested in working with others to form a self-help group in your community?

_____YES.....1
_____NO.....2

5a. Would you be interested in joining a self-help group in your community?

Yes.....1
_____No.....2

------- GO TO QUESTION #10

6. Of the following resources, which do you feel would be helpful in facilitating a self-help group in your community? Would you need:

a. Written materials on how to start self-help groups?

YES.....1

NO.....2

b. A series of workshops in your community?

YES.....1

NO.....2

c. Ongoing consultation?

YES.....1

NO.....2

d. Names of resource people in your area who are interested in helping to start self-help groups?

YES.....1

NO.....2

e. Is there anything else you can think of?

_____

_____

_____

_____

7. In what ways do you feel a self-help group would be beneficial in your community?

_____

_____

_____

_____

8. When would you like to get a group started?

_____

_____

9. Do you want Sharon, the research assistant, to call you back and set up a meeting with you and others in your community?

_____YES.....1
NO.....2

9a. When would be a good time?_____

10. O.K. this is the end of the survey, do you have any additional comments or suggestions?

_____

_____

_____

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION, YOUR CONTRIBUTION IS GREATLY APPRECIATED!

APPENDIX A: (CONTINUED)
TELEPHONE SURVEY FOR THE PROFESSIONAL GROUP

ATTITUDES TOWARDS FARM STRESS WORKSHOP- PART II

Hello, Is (first/last name) there please?

This is (interviewer's name) from the Saskatchewan Self-help Developmental Unit. In December you participated in a workshop we sponsored which focused on farm stress. At that time, you completed a questionnaire regarding your evaluation of the workshop. Since you have had time to think over the various aspects of the workshop more clearly, we would now like to get some of your present thoughts regarding the workshop and on the development of a self-help group in your community.

The questions I need to ask should take about 15 minutes. I want to add that I would be happy to answer any questions you might have about the study, either now or later.

Okay?--Yes(proceed with survey)
No (thank you for your time)

1. We would like to begin by asking you how satisfied you are with the workshop? Would you say you are very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, neither satisfied or dissatisisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied?

VERY SATISFIED..... 1
SOMEWHAT SATISFIED.....2
NEITHER SATISFIED OR DISSATISFIED.....3
SOMEWHAT DISSATISFIED.....4
VERY DISSATISFIED.....5

2. What parts of the workshop do you feel were most useful?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

3. Was there anything that was not covered by the workshop in which you would be intertested in learning about?

_____
_____
_____
_____

4. Have you or anyone else you know of taken any action towards resolving some of your concerns regarding the farm crisis?

_____YES.....1
NO.....2

4a. What were these actions?

_____
_____
_____
_____

5. Would you be interested in facilitating the formation of a self-help group in your community?

_____ Yes.....1

_____No.....2

GO TO QUESTION #10

6. Of the following resources, which do you feel would be helpful to you in starting a self-help group in your community? Would you need:

a. Written materials on how to start self-help groups?

YES.....1

NO.....2

b. A series of workshops in your community?

YES.....1

NO.....2

c. Ongoing consultation

YES.....1

NO.....2

d. Names of resource people in your community who are interested in helping to start self-help groups?

YES.....1

NO.....2

e. Is there anything else you can think of?

_____

_____

_____

7. In what ways do you feel a self-help group would be beneficial in your community?

_____
_____
_____
_____

8. When would you like to get a group started?

_____
_____

9. Do you want Sharon, the research assistant, to call you back and set up a meeting time with you and others in your community?

YES..... 1
NO..... 2

9a. When would be a good time to call?_____

10. O.K., this is the end of the survey, do you have any additional comments or suggestions?

_____

_____

_____

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION, YOUR CONTRIBUTION IS GREATLY APPRECIATED!

APPENDIX B

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS AND PUBLISHED ARTICLES

Presentations:

July, 1989, National Rural Mental Health Conference, Madison, Wisconsin
"Self-Help Programs for Farm Families: A Canadian Approach"

May, 1989, 5th Annual Northwestern Ontario Human Services Conference, Atikokan, Ontario
"Supporting Self-Help Approaches in Rural Communities"

April, 1989, Parent's Place, Lethbridge, Alberta(one day workshop)
"Shared Leadership in Rural Self-Help Groups"

April, 1989, Canadian Council on Social Development, Ottawa, Ontario (Hector Balthazar, Self-Help Consultant)
One day consultation on farm families project

April, 1989, Community Health Fair, Biggar, Saskatchewan

February, 1989, Canadian Mental Health Association and Rural Crisis Committee, Dauphin, Manitoba
"Self-Help Group Development in Rural Areas"

January, 1989, Friends for Farm Families, Guelph, Ontario
"Self-Help Groups for Farm Families in Crisis"

November, 1988, Saskatchewan Women's Agricultural Network, Rockglen, Saskatchewan
"Self-Help Groups for Farm Families in Crisis"

November, 1988, Carlton Trail Regional College, Area Committees Watrous, Aylesbury, and Humboldt, Saskatchewan
"Self-Help Groups for Farm Families in Crisis"

Published Articles:

Miller, S. (1989). Self-Help Approaches for Farm Families in Crisis. Rural Community Mental Health Newsletter. In press.